



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.48

Subject:	Conducting Diligent Searches
Authority:	TCA 37-5-106
Standards:	None
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Staff and Personnel.

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services will to assist all children/youth and families in careful search for known and unknown parents, along with relatives and significant kin who may provide a support to both the child and family. This search will begin with the child/youth's first contact with DCS, will include a thorough search of all potential resources, and will continue throughout the child/youth's involvement with DCS. The tools described within this policy are to be completed and updated during the family's continuing contact with DCS.

Purpose:

Maintaining or placement of children in a safe and secure environment is the primary focus of DCS. Building a supportive environment for a child/youth and family to succeed within their own home or in out of home care is of utmost importance. Failure to identify appropriate relative resources in a timely manner may unnecessarily delay the achievement of permanent placement of children/youth. Completion of the tools will help capture information helpful in the development of the child's Lifebook, background information for formal presentations, full disclosure forms and subsidy documents.

Procedures:

A. Initiating a Diligent Search	<p>The following activities are suggested to complete a diligent search for a child's parent, known and unknown, and any other relative or significant kin:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. During conversations with the parent gather information on any relatives, friends or significant kin that could be a resource for the child/youth or family. Obtain addresses, telephone numbers, the last school the child attended, doctor's names, tribal affiliation (if applicable) and any other information that would be helpful in locating resources for the child. This information will be recorded on form CS-0777, Family Functional Assessment (FFA) and Guide and form CS-0774, Contact Sheets for the Genogram attached to the FFA.2. When trying to locate the whereabouts of a parent or an absent parent, contact all known relatives and friends. Share information of relatives and friends with the regional attorney, to assist in achieving personal service of
--	--

	<p>court documents.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Review social service and public assistance records for identification of the parent, relative or significant kin and last known addresses. 4. Request information from the records of other states if the individual being sought is alleged to be residing in another state. 5. Check post offices, city directories and telephone directories for name and address listings. 6. Check police records for any records of address. 7. Check with in-state or out-of-state Driver's License Agencies for an address. 8. If the individuals are believed to be in the military or recently discharged from the military, check with the appropriate branch of the military service for a current address. 9. If the individual being sought is alleged to be a student, check with the appropriate school for information concerning the parent's address. 10. Send a letter CS-0584 Diligent Search Letter, certified-return receipt, to the last known address marked "Address Correction Requested – Do Not Forward", when a current address is unknown. Document the results on the CS-0584 Diligent Search Checklist 11. Check the following sources as applicable: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Last known landlord, b) Department of employment security, c) Last known employer, d) Utility companies, e) Internet Searches f) County records that are in the possession of the county tax assessor, g) Registrar of deeds, or h) County court clerk. 12. Lexis/Nexis
B. Conducting a Diligent Search	<p>Diligent Searches for parents, relatives and significant kin shall be conducted in the following manner:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Worker assigned to the child's case will have the primary responsibility for conducting the diligent search. This process will begin when the case is opened and will continue until the child reaches permanence. 2. Document all efforts and results in the case record. 3. If previously absent parent is located, reasonable efforts and engagement of that parent will occur as soon as possible, and be evidenced in the permanency plan. 4. If a relative or other significant kin is located the FSW will ask that individual if they will join the Child and Family Team. 5. When engaging the child/youth and families the worker will inquire about resources that will assist in locating possible placement or support resources

	(e.g. mentor or visitation). This information will be record in TNKids within thirty (30) days of the occurrence and also added to form CS-0777, Family Functional Assessment and Guide .
C. Data Systems Documentation	Information regarding diligent search efforts and outcomes should be documented in TNKids by the staff person who is responsible for completing the searches and must be entered within thirty (30) days of date of the occurrence.

Forms:	<i>CS-0584 Diligent Search Checklist</i> <i>CS-0777 Family Functional Assessment and Guide</i> <i>CS-0774 Contact Sheets for the Genogram</i>
Collateral Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lexis/Nexis Search Results• Policy Attachment - Diligent Search Internet Websites

Glossary:	
Case File/Record	A written compilation that describes the client and the services delivered. Records can be in hard copy and/or electronic format. The case record can be used as a source of information for quality improvement or other evaluation activities, for research purposes, or to demonstrate accountability to funding bodies.
Diligent Search	To search for/identification of relatives and/or significant kin to assist in provide in locating the child/youth and family. While also identifying supportive services to a child/youth during and after involvement with the Department to include such support as mentoring, respite or permanent placement. This process begins during the CPS investigation/assessment and continues until the child is in a permanent placement
Significant Kin	Non-relative adults who have a significant relationship with a child in out-of-home placement (e.g. godparents or family friend).